

Victory Over Death (1 Corinthians 15)

Easter Sunday 20-Apr-25

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 & 12-22 & 35-38 & 42-44 & 50-58

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

The Resurrection of the Dead

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

The Resurrection Body

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Please have your **Bibles opened** to **1 Corinthians 15 starting at verse 1**

There’s an **outline** for you to take **notes**. Let me **pray** first. Let’s pray...

Intro/Death/What If?

Death is a monster!

Having conducted over **100 funerals** – I've **seen firsthand** the **devastating effect** the **death of a loved one** has on a family!

Death is a monster!

What I've **noticed** at these **funerals** is

- When the funeral is for an unbeliever - or for a believer where most - if not all - of the family are non-believers – there is **incredible grief and sorrow and sadness** – and **very little hope for those in attendance**.
- Whereas when the funeral is for a believer – yes there's still grief and sorrow – but there's also **incredible thanks to God and rejoicing that there is the certain hope of Heaven** for the deceased - and - for the believers in attendance – and **there is the certain hope of resurrection**

As some of you know – before I went into ministry I was a **computer programmer**. When I was writing a program – I **had to think of every scenario that the user of my program my do**. For example – they **might type in letters instead of numbers for their date of birth** – or **say they were born like 3 centuries ago** or **born in the future**.

I was constantly asking myself – “**what if**” they do this, “**what if**” they do that. Unfortunately, it **means my brain is wired that way now!**

So, I'm always thinking “what if” my car breaks down coming to church, “what if” my USB with my scripture lesson doesn't work at school – so I now have 5 backups!

It also means when I conduct funerals now – I ask myself - “what if” it were me in the coffin, how would that affect my family and friends.

Context (1 Corinthians 15:12, 32)

The **Apostle Paul** would make a good computer programmer.

Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is a “what if” chapter.

The **context** is - the Corinthians that Paul was writing to are basically asking the question based on v12 – “what if” there is no resurrection of the dead!

[Slide-v12]

V12 says - *But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

Greek culture of the day **believed** that only the soul is immortal and the **body** is nothing and doesn't matter – so why would there be a need to have a resurrected body?

[Slide-V32]

Also, Greek culture of the day **believed** the senses surrounding the immortal soul were **given by Nature** and **could not be enjoyed beyond the grave** – therefore there was the attitude as in v32 – *let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die*

Imagine if this life on Earth was all we had – we go through the ups and downs of life – and then die – that's it – dead and buried – nothing more.

That **would certainly influence how we live out our life** – wouldn't it?

So, because of this doubt of a resurrected body

First up, in verses 1 to 11 – **Paul defines the Gospel and concludes that the Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead – so Jesus had a resurrected body.**

[Slide-Point 1]

1. The Gospel says Jesus rose from the Dead (1 Cor 15:1-11)

See v1 **Paul says** – I **preached** this **Gospel** to you Corinthians - remember – and you **received** it – and **took a stand upon it** – in other words you **believed** it

So, what is this **Gospel**?

See V3 – the Gospel is – **Christ died for our sins** – it's a **simple statement** but it **covers** the entire **Bible's history** – it **takes us back** to the first people **Adam** and **Eve** and the **Garden** of Eden – and it takes us back to the fact that they **disobeyed God's rule** – and **ate the forbidden fruit** – and by doing so – **sin** (disobeying God) **came into the world** – and that **sin angered God** because **He cannot look at sin** – and so with that sin - the **punishment for sin** came into the world – namely **death**.

But here Paul says – **Christ died for our sins**.

By God's grace (undeserved favour) He **sent** His Son **Jesus [The Christ – chosen One]** to Earth on a **rescue mission** - and Christ Jesus died on the cross for **our sins to be put on Him** and He **gave us forgiveness** – this is the **major theme** Paul

preaches in this **letter** (as 1 Cor 2:2 says - *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified*)

We also see that Christ dying for our sins - was **all part of Scripture** – still in v3 it says – *according to Scripture* – the **Bible said** He would die – see Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53 for example

The **Gospel** also **includes** that **Jesus was buried** – to be buried **Jesus had to die** – this is **important** because **remember** the **punishment for sin** is death – so if Jesus takes our punishment – then **He must die** in our place

But the Gospel continues – v4 – that God the **Father raised Jesus** from the dead on the **3rd day** – and again it's **according to Scriptures** – the **Bible said He would rise** from the dead [Ps 16:10; 30:3; Hos 13:14; Jonah 1:17/Matt 12:40; 16:4; Luke 30:10; Acts 2:24-28] – and **Jesus Himself said He would rise** after 3 days.

Why is the **resurrection** important?

Without the **resurrection** – the punishment for sin is not removed – death still wins

But **when Jesus rose** – he **showed** and **proved** – **death can't hold him down!**

That's why the Apostle **Paul takes the Corinthians back to the Gospel**

Because the resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the **Gospel**

Unless **Jesus dies for sin** to be **forgiven** – unless **Jesus takes the punishment** from **sin away from us** – and unless **Jesus removes the punishment of sin altogether by**

defeating death and being raised to life – and unless all this happens we can't be resurrected either – then **there's no Gospel – no Good News** – it's just bad news!

Now remember the **Corinthians doubted the resurrection of the body**

So, Paul sets out to **prove the resurrection is true**

Now we don't necessarily **need proof**

We **could** just simply **have faith and believe!**

After all **faith is believing something without necessarily being able to see it - or prove it**

The **proof** Paul gives is **eye witnesses** – see verses 5 to 8

Eye witnesses are the key to **prove any historical event** – **people were there at the time of the historical event and witnessed it**

In this case – the risen **Jesus appeared to Peter, the Apostles, over 500 people** – most still living in Paul's time – so anyone can check out what they saw – and He also appeared to **James** and to **Paul himself**

That's an **incredible number of witnesses**. We don't **require that many witnesses in a court today** to prove a case. Even in **OT times** – **only 2 or 3 witnesses** were **enough** to prove a case (Deut 19:15)

The other reason for mentioning these witnesses, is so that Paul can say in verse 11 – these **witnesses** whether Paul or any of the others – they all **had the same message** to preach – the **Gospel** – that Jesus died and rose again – this is what **they preached** – and this is what the **Corinthians believed** – and it's what us **Toukleyians believe** too! I pray!

So, the **Gospel** is personal – it's not just **believing** an **historical event** – it's **believing** that **Jesus died** for me – and **Jesus rose** for me – and **Jesus** is **Lord** of my life – as v2 says – by the **Gospel** YOU are **saved**

What Paul has done then is to **prove conclusively** that **Jesus rose** from the dead – and that's fundamental **to** the **Gospel** - that's **fundamental** for the **Corinthians** and **fundamental** for us – as he'll go on to explain

Paul's 2nd point – **because the Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead – we also rise from the dead** – that's in verses 12 to 34

[Slide-Point 2]

2. Because Jesus rose, we rise from the Dead (1 Cor 15:12-34)

Paul argues in v12 – how can the **Corinthians say** there's **no resurrection** of the dead – I've just **proven conclusively** **Jesus rose** from the dead?

He **continues** his **argument** – if there's **no resurrection** of the dead there are a **number of problems**:

- It means - **Jesus hasn't risen either** (v13). Paul's arguing **God can't raise Jesus** if the **concept** of **raising** people from the dead **doesn't exist**. **Jesus's resurrection** is **paramount** - for anyone else to be raised from the dead
- Also, if **Jesus hasn't been raised** – no amount of **preaching** will **make** any **difference** – it's just a **waste of time** – I can preach all day – but if the foundation of the preaching – which is Jesus' was raised to life is not true – it's **useless preaching** – v14

- It **also means**, Paul and the other apostles are **false witnesses** – they’re **preaching lies** – v15
- It also means our faith is futile – we’re basically **believing a lie** – if Jesus hasn’t been raised back to life. If some how they found a tomb in Jerusalem – and found **Jesus’ bones in it** and could somehow prove it – what would that do to our faith? Our **faith** would be **completely shattered** wouldn’t it?
- And if Jesus hasn’t been raised – then V17 – then we’re still in our sins. For our sins to be forgiven – Jesus has to die – and then rise again to complete the sacrifice and remove the punishment for sin – which is death.
- And if Jesus hasn’t been raised – then all the **believers who** have **already died** – have **died believing a lie** – and **they’re lost** and gone forever – v18
- If all we have is a bit of **inspiration** in this life – then we’re in a **sorry state** aren’t we – v19

But **Paul** concludes – v20 – **all these problems** don’t exist - because Jesus has been raised!

Paul **can** even **refer to death as sleeping** – because **death** is not this **evil monster** we have to face – because of Jesus’ resurrection

Paul says **Jesus** is **like the first in a long line of people raised from the dead** – see v20 – Jesus’ is the **firstfruits** of the **harvest** of people to be raised. **Firstfruits** of a

crop **guarantee** there's **more** of the **crop to come**. **Jesus'** resurrection **guarantees every believer's resurrection**.

He **compares the first man Adam** (v22) – with Jesus

- **Adam brought death** to everyone. **Because** of Adam's **sin** – we **all inherit sin and death**
- But **Jesus brought life** leading to **eternal life** - to those who believe in Him – through His death & resurrection

Then comes the **end** – Paul says – v24 – when **Jesus delivers the kingdom into the Father's hands** – when He has **defeated all powers of evil**

In fact, **Jesus is reigning now** – v25 – it's not like He's died and rose and gone to Heaven and left us to our own devices – He's reigning now – **making sure all enemies are defeated**

Including the **final enemy** which is **death** –

When will this end happen? **When Jesus returns** (see 1 The 4)

Paul also throws in a couple of **extra reasons** why the **resurrection** of believers is **true**

- See v29 – why do **people offer** to be **baptized** for those who are **already** in the **grave**? **What's the point** of them doing that, if there's **no resurrection** of their body?
- And v30 – 32 – Paul asks **why does he and other preachers risk** all sorts of **danger** (like Paul did in Ephesus) – if there's **no resurrection**. He's saying do you think we'd risk our necks if there was no chance that the

resurrection is true? **Preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus** - is Paul's sole purpose for ministry.

He **finishes** his **point** in v33 – **warning the Corinthians (and us) not** to be **hoodwinked** by any talk of there being **no resurrection**. Paul even quotes a **Greek poet, Meander**, “**bad company corrupts good character**”. His point is - if we hang around with people with unbiblical thinking; we can be deceived.

Paul's 3rd point

Because the **Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead**, **which also means we will rise from the dead** – the **Gospel guarantees we will have a resurrected body** – that's **verses 35-57**

[Slide-Point 3]

3. The Gospel guarantees a resurrected body (1 Cor 15:35-57)

See v35 – **Paul asks the question** that – he assumes would be next question **on the doubter's lips**

If we are going to rise from the dead – what kind of body will we have?

To explain what the resurrected body will be like - **Paul uses a few analogies:**

Analogy 1 – is a **farming** analogy – what we **sow** in the **ground** can't come to life **unless it dies**. **Wheat** has **2 modes of existence** – a **seed buried** in the **ground** which is **like it's dead** – and then a **crop of wheat springs to life** when the seed grows. In the same way – our **earthly body has to die** (buried or cremated) to **rise & grow** as our **spiritual heavenly body** made for **eternity**.

Analogy 2 – Just like there are **different earthly bodies** – like **people, animals, birds and fish** – so there are **different kinds of heavenly bodies**. There are even **heavenly bodies** like the **sun, moon and stars**.

His point is that our **earthly body** has **different attributes** to our **heavenly body**.

Our **earthly body** is **perishable** (it **dies**) – our **resurrected** body will be **imperishable** (it **lives forever**)

Our **earthly body** is **full of dishonour** (because it's **sinful**) – whereas our **resurrected body** is **glorious** (because it's **pure** and **sinless** because of Jesus)

Our **earthly body** is **natural** (physical) – whereas our resurrected body is **spiritual**.
The **bottom line** is – our **earthly body** is **made** for **earth** and our **heavenly body** is **made** for **heaven**.

Comparing Adam and Jesus again – in vv45-49 – Paul says:

All **human beings** share **Adam's nature** and are **earthly** – but **Christians** also share **Jesus' nature** – and are **heavenly**.

For Christians there is the **guaranteed continuity** of **existence** with the **resurrection** of **their body** and its **transformation** into the **likeness** of **Jesus**.

Having this promise of a **resurrected body** because of **Jesus** – **gives us** assurance – that our **earthly perishable body** will one day be **changed** into a **heavenly imperishable body**.

This happens – v52 – when Jesus returns – and the **trumpet sounds** – those **already dead** will be **raised** with **imperishable** bodies – and those still alive will be **changed** – all in the **twinkling** of an **eye**.

Paul describes this as the **final victory over death**

Death **no longer** has any **sting**.

What **wonderful assurance** Christians have of **living with God forever** in Heaven – it's not a maybe – or if I'm good enough – it's **guaranteed** because of our faith in **Jesus**. This is **the promise of the Gospel**.

And it **means Christians** don't **need to be afraid of dying!**

The Gospel Requires our Response (v58)

Now - the **Gospel** is not just something cognitive, **something that we just merely KNOW** – it **requires** a **response** in our lives

The **Gospel** **requires** us to **belief** it – to **have faith in it**.

Our **faith** in the Gospel **means we're right with God and saved**.

But our **faith** must never be alone.

Our response must be **head, heart AND hands**:

In v58 – Paul gives **our response** to the Gospel – actually 3 responses

[Slide-Response]

1. **Stand firm** – it means to **refuse to change our position on the truth** of the **Gospel** of Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the **rock-solid foundation** that our **faith** is **built on**. The **rock-solid guarantee** of our own **resurrection one day**

– this guarantee should be the foundation we will **build our lives on** – and we should **never turn away** from that faith.

2. **Let nothing move you** – we are to be an **immovable object** – when it comes to our **belief in the Gospel** – and particularly the resurrection. **We are not to be led astray** by other people trying to **undermine our belief** – or other people trying to **sow doubts** in our mind.
3. Instead – we are to **give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord**. What is this **work of the Lord**? It is to **bring the Gospel** – good news – to those who don't know. That Gospel work is not just telling people about **Jesus' love** – but showing them **Jesus' love**. As Jesus said – “*whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me*” (Matt 25:40)

Conclusion

This work is not in vain – because **we will be resurrected one day and** as **Hebrews 6:10** says – which is where we'll finish

[Slide-Heb 6:10]

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for Jesus' victory over death – so that we have the certain hope of our own resurrection and eternal life with you to look forward.

Help us to stand firm in our faith in the Gospel – that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again. Help nothing move or shake our faith in the finished work of Jesus. And please equip us through your Word and your Spirit, to give ourselves to the work you have prepared for us, particularly sharing the love of Jesus with others. In HIS Name, we pray. AMEN.

Benediction (1 Peter 1:3-4)

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. Amen